

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system for determining whether a mail piece has been opened, comprising:
  - one or more mail pieces, each of said mail pieces including means for indicating a state of said mail piece, said state being one of a never opened state and a previously opened state;
  - an interrogator unit for receiving first information relating to each of said mail pieces, said first information including said state of said mail piece; and
  - a data center in communication with said interrogator unit, said data center receiving said first information from said interrogator unit.
2. A system according to claim 1, said indicating means being a state change element.
3. A system according to claim 2, said interrogator unit being an RFID reader, each of said mail pieces having an RFID tag attached thereto in electrical communication with said state change element, said RFID tag transmitting said first information to said RFID reader.
4. A system according to claim 3, said RFID tag further comprising a memory cell for registering said state of said mail piece.

5. A system according to claim 3, said state change element being a photodetector, each of said mail pieces further comprising an opaque piece for covering said photodetector when said mail piece is in said never opened state.
6. A system according to claim 5, wherein said opaque piece is removed from said photodetector when said mail piece is in said opened state.
7. A system according to claim 3, said RFID tag having second information stored therein, said second information including a unique code, said first information including said second information.
8. A system according to claim 7, said second information further including information relating to a mailer of said mail piece and information relating to an intended recipient of said mail piece.
9. A system according to claim 7, said second information for each of said mail pieces further including information relating to a date or time said mail piece was mailed.
10. A system according to claim 3, said RFID reader periodically transmitting one or more interrogation signals and receiving said first information in response to said one or more interrogation signals from those of said mail pieces located within a range of

said RFID reader.

11. A system according to claim 10, said RFID reader recording for each mail piece that is previously opened a time of opening, said time of opening for each mail piece being determined based on a first time when said state forming a part of said first information is a previously opened state, said time of opening being transmitted to said data center.

12. A system according to claim 3, said RFID tag for each mail piece that is opened recording a time of opening, said time of opening being a first time said state changes from a never opened state to a previously opened state, said first information for each mail piece further comprising said time of opening.

13. A system according to claim 10, said RFID reader recording for each mail piece a time of receipt, said time of receipt for each mail piece being determined based on a first time when said first information for said mail piece is received by said RFID reader.

14. A system according to claim 13, said time of receipt for each mail piece being transmitted to said data center.

15. A system according to claim 11, said RFID reader further recording for each mail piece a time of receipt, said time of receipt for each mail piece being

determined based on a first time when said first information for said mail piece is received by said RFID reader, said RFID reader determining an interval between said time of receipt and said time of opening, said interval being transmitted to said data center.

16. A system according to claim 12, said RFID reader further recording for each mail piece a time of receipt, said time of receipt for each mail piece being determined based on a first time when said first information for said mail piece is received by said RFID reader, said RFID reader determining an interval between said time of receipt and said time of opening, said interval being transmitted to said data center.

17. A system according to claim 10, said RFID reader recording for each mail piece deemed to be discarded a time of discarding, said time of discarding for each mail piece being determined based on a first time said first information is not received by said RFID reader in response to said one or more interrogation signals after said first information has been previously received by said RFID reader.

18. A system according to claim 17, said time of discarding for each mail piece being transmitted to said data center.

19. A system according to claim 17, said RFID reader further recording for each mail piece a time of receipt, said time of receipt for each mail piece being

determined based on a first time when said first information for said mail piece is received by said RFID reader, said RFID reader determining an interval between said time of receipt and said time of discarding, said interval being transmitted to said data center.

20. A system according to claim 7, further comprising one or more second RFID readers located in or near one or more of a trash can, a trash truck and a trash dump, said second RFID readers receiving and storing said first information and creating third information indicating for each mail piece within a range thereof that said mail piece has been discarded.

21. A system according to claim 7, said RFID reader further comprising means for generating a removal request for each of one or more of said mail pieces, said removal request requesting that said recipient be removed from a mailing list associated with said mail piece, said removal request for said each of said one or more of said mail pieces being transmitted to said data center.

22. A system according to claim 7, said RFID reader further comprising means for generating a recipient action request for each of one or more of said mail pieces, said recipient action request requesting a desired action by said recipient relating to said mail piece.

23. A system according to claim 22, said desired action being a renewal or cancellation of a subscription.

24. A system according to claim 1, said first information including information relating to multiple changes of said state for said mail piece.

25. A system according to claim 7, said unique code being associated with a mailer of said mail piece, further comprising a database, said database storing information for each said unique code relating to at least one of an intended recipient of said mail piece and a date or time said mail piece was mailed.

26. A system according to claim 1, further comprising one or more additional interrogator units, each of said additional interrogator units receiving additional first information relating to one or more mail pieces, said data center receiving said additional first information from each of said additional interrogator units and consolidating said first information and said additional first information.

27. A system according to claim 1, said indicating means comprising first and second pieces of information provided with said mail piece, said first piece of information indicating said never opened state and said second piece of information indicating said previously opened state, wherein for each of one or more of said mail pieces a recipient communicates one of said first piece of information and said second

piece of information to said interrogator unit.

28. A system according to claim 27, wherein said first piece of information and said second piece of information each comprise a bar code, said interrogator unit further comprising a bar code scanner.

29. A system according to claim 27, wherein said first piece of information and said second piece of information each comprise text, said interrogator unit further comprising at least one of an OCR reader and a manual entry system.

30. A method for determining whether a mail piece has been opened, comprising:

receiving one or more mail pieces at a recipient location;

receiving at an interrogator unit at said recipient location first information from each of one or more of said mail pieces, said first information for each of said mail pieces including a state of said mail piece, said state being one of a never opened state and a previously opened state; and

transmitting said first information from said interrogator unit to a data center.

31. A method according to claim 30, wherein each of said mail pieces includes means for indicating said state of said mail piece.

32. A method according to claim 30, wherein each of said mail pieces includes a state change element for indicating said state of said mail piece.

33. A method according to claim 32, said interrogator unit being an RFID reader, each of said mail pieces having an RFID tag attached thereto in communication with said state change element, said method further comprising using said RFID tags to transmit said first information for each of said one or more of said mail pieces to said RFID reader.

34. A method according to claim 33, further comprising registering said state of each of said mail pieces in a memory cell.

35. A method according to claim 33, said state change element being a photodetector, each of said mail pieces further comprising an opaque piece for covering said photodetector when said mail piece is in said never opened state, said method further comprising changing said state of each mail piece to said previously opened state when said opaque piece is removed from said photodetector.

36. A method according to claim 33, said RFID tag having second information relating to said mail piece stored therein, said second information including at least one of a unique code, information relating to a mailer of said mail piece and information relating to an intended recipient of said mail piece, said first information



including said second information.

37. A method according to claim 36, said second information for each of said mail pieces further including information relating to a date or time said mail piece was mailed.

38. A method according to claim 33, further comprising periodically transmitting one or more interrogation signals from said RFID reader, said step of receiving said first information comprising receiving said first information from those of said mail pieces located within a range of said RFID reader in response to said one or more interrogation signals.

39. A method according to claim 38, further comprising recording in said RFID reader a time of opening for each mail piece that is opened, said time of opening for each mail piece being determined based on a first time when said state forming a part of said first information is a previously opened state, and transmitting said time of opening to said data center.

40. A method according to claim 33, further comprising recording in said RFID tag a time of opening for each mail piece that is opened, said time of opening being a first time said state changes from a never opened state to a previously opened state, said first information for each mail piece further comprising said time of opening.

41. A method according to claim 38, further comprising recording in said RFID reader a time of receipt for each mail piece, said time of receipt for each mail piece being determined based on a first time when said first information for said mail piece is received by said RFID reader.

42. A method according to claim 41, further comprising transmitting said time of receipt for each mail piece to said data center.

43. A method according to claim 39, further comprising recording in said RFID reader a time of receipt for each mail piece, said time of receipt for each mail piece being determined based on a first time when said first information for said mail piece is received by said RFID reader, determining at said RFID reader an interval between said time of receipt and said time of opening, and transmitting said interval to said data center.

44. A method according to claim 40, further comprising recording in said RFID reader a time of receipt for each mail piece, said time of receipt for each mail piece being determined based on a first time when said first information for said mail piece is received by said RFID reader, determining at said RFID reader an interval between said time of receipt and said time of opening, and transmitting said interval to said data center.

45. A method according to claim 38, further comprising recording in said RFID reader a time of discarding for each mail piece deemed to be discarded, said time of discarding for each mail piece being determined based on a first time said first

information is not received by said RFID reader in response to said one or more interrogation signals after said first information has been previously received by said RFID reader.

46. A method according to claim 45, further comprising transmitting said time of discarding for each mail piece to said data center.

47. A method according to claim 45, further comprising recording in said RFID reader a time of receipt for each mail piece, said time of receipt for each mail piece being determined based on a first time when said first information for said mail piece is received by said RFID reader, determining at said RFID reader an interval between said time of receipt and said time of discarding, and transmitting said interval to said data center.

48. A method according to claim 36, further comprising receiving and storing said first information in one or more second RFID readers located in or near one or more of a trash can, a trash truck and a trash dump and creating third information indicating for each mail piece within a range said one or more second RFID readers that said mail piece has been discarded.

49. A method according to claim 36, further comprising generating a removal request for each of one or more of said mail pieces using said RFID reader, said removal request requesting that said recipient be removed from a mailing list associated with said

mail piece, and transmitting said removal request for said each of said one or more of said mail pieces to said data center.

50. A method according to claim 36, further comprising generating a recipient action request for each of one or more of said mail pieces, said recipient action request requesting a desired action by said recipient relating to said mail piece.

51. A method according to claim 50, said desired action being a renewal or cancellation of a subscription.

52. A method according to claim 30, said first information including information relating to multiple changes of state for said mail piece.

53. A method according to claim 36, said unique code being associated with a mailer of said mail piece, said method further comprising storing in a database information for each said unique code relating to at least one of an intended recipient of said mail piece and a date or time said mail piece was mailed.

54. A method according to claim 30, further comprising receiving at said data center additional first information relating to one or more mail pieces from one or more additional interrogator units and consolidating said first information and said additional first information.

55. A method according to claim 30, wherein in said receiving step, a recipient of said one or more mail pieces communicates said first information to said interrogator unit.

56. A method according to claim 55, wherein said recipient communicates said first information by scanning a bar code.

57. A method according to claim 55, wherein said recipient communicates said first information by scanning or manually entering text.